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devout astronomer,' could they escape it? It follows, as inference from premises, as cause from effect. A man, who reads a work of genius, if he comprehends it, unavoidably admires its author. How could a similar, but loftier sentiment fail to arise from a study of the volume of nature !

But this volume has an advantage, in one respect, over all other volumes. It is, as we have already intimated, 'ever open before us, and we may read it at our leisure.' Nay, we must read it, if we understand its language, almost in spite of ourselves. 'Its line is gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world.' Now of this various, unceasing, omnipresent communication, knowledge, knowledge, we repeat, is the great interpreter. It would make the world a new sphere to us, a sphere of new and nobler influences. Nothing that we remember, besides the direct effect of religious emotion, ever so effectually and entirely placed us in a 'new world,' as the simple philosophical history of vegetation. Knowledge would write lessons of piety on every leaf. Every 'turf would be a fragrant shrine.' The earth, in its light, would rear ten thousand altars around us. The air we breathe would be incense. And heaven, beyond towering arch or temple's dome, would bear us to contemplations, glorious, sublime, unspeakable, of the adorable Creator.

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ART. II.—*Curiosity ; a Poem, delivered at Cambridge, before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, August 27, 1829.* By CHARLES SPRAGUE. Boston. J. T. Buckingham. 8vo. pp. 30.

IF we may believe certain high authorities, it was once thought that poetry required peculiar natural powers ; such as are not given to all men, at least in the same measure. The poet, in order to pass muster, was required to possess the highest attributes of mind and the best affections of the heart ; to have an eye wide and searching, quick to discern the magnificence and glory of nature, and able to look down into the depths of the soul. Beside the delicate sensibility which voluntary retirement could give him, he was expected to have an acquaintance with all the principles of human action, from the power which lifted and swayed the stormy passions of



the multitude, to the hair-spring which set in motion the wayward ambition of kings. But not to dwell on these easy generalities, it is enough to say, that the poet was the favorite creation of the imagination of the ancients. Their deities were hardly respectable in their character and pretensions; they were nothing more than human agents, exalted to the power and dignity of evil spirits; with more capacity of doing evil, and even less disposition to do good. The poet made the hero; so that he had no rival in the admiration of men; and this may account for the number and greatness of the qualifications required in those who aspired to the sacred name.

For many years this imaginary being has ceased to be found, and grave men have doubted, whether any such ever existed. Certainly, the impression that any peculiar powers are required for the production of poetry is completely done away. The time which Johnson prophesied, in no good humor, is come in this country, if not in his own, when 'the cook warbles lyrics in the kitchen, and the thresher vociferates his dithyrambs in the barn.' One of the first efforts of our forefathers was to destroy the monopoly of genius, and to impress upon their children the valuable truth, that man could do again whatever man had done. They entered the sacred ground of poetry without putting off their shoes, and made sure of success beforehand, by establishing the principle, that praise was due to well-meant exertion. If an epitaph, an elegy, or even a hymn-book was called for, they considered it not a matter of choice, but of duty, to supply the demand. Even the great epics of our country, in more modern times, were written with the same intrepidity. The writers saw that all other great nations had their distinguished poetical works, and they resolved that their own land should not be without them; if no one else would write them, they would; though they had little leisure for the labor, and for the art itself neither propensity nor vocation.

From their time to the present, Mr Kettell will bear us witness, vast quantities of good merchantable poetry, of which his three volumes are only specimens, have been thrown into the market every year; or rather, we should say, have been produced; for some of the worthies of that collection little dreamed of being translated from the dark corner of a newspaper to a place among the northern stars. The result of



making this business so common has been a great development of mechanical skill. Very tolerable verse may now be made with very little expense of time and labor ; though there is reason to fear, that, in many cases, the workmanship covers the want of material. It is not long since an individual in one of our cities offered to supply the public with good verse, suited to any occasion, and at low prices ; but the domestic manufacture had become so common, that he found no encouragement in his profession. We are evidently approaching a state of independence, even beyond that contemplated by the American system ; when not only our nation shall cease to be indebted to others, but every individual shall furnish his own supply ; and as all are pretty well satisfied with their exploits in verse, we rejoice in believing that every one will be supplied to his mind with poetry, which, if none of the best, is good enough for him.

But it must not be denied, that those who are inclined to look upon the dark side, represent this as a sign of the temporary decline of the art. For they say, and, it must be confessed, with some show of reason, that the gods have made excellence the prize of labor ; and if the public are disposed to favor productions of the lighter kind, the fact, that excellence is no longer required, proves that the public taste is also declining. Neither is the success of the great poets of the present day any objection to this statement, because the labor spoken of is not required for single efforts, but in the preparation for great exertions. Thus it was by slow degrees, that Scott prepared himself for those works, which are now the wonder of the world ; it was not at once, that Moore became master of his miraculous versification and imagery ; and it was long before Mrs Hemans acquired that beautiful power, which now appears, however lightly her hand passes over the strings. With all their fine natural talent, they evidently felt and acted upon the conviction, that labor was essential to excellence and permanent success. Such is the opinion of sundry poetical skeptics ; and whether it is a sound and sensible doctrine, or only an antiquated prejudice, time will show, when the momentary fashion is passed away. One thing, however, is clear ; that those, who believe that no industry is required, fall into direct and servile imitation, and that not of the best models. For even to become sensible of the excellences of the great masters of the art, re-



quires thought and study ; no man is struck, at the first glance, with the greatness of the *Paradise Lost*, any more than the power of one of *Raffaelle's* pictures ; we do not choose such works for the entertainment of our leisure hours, till we have become familiar with their beauties ; and as such works are not so popular as those which are less admired, the judicious race of imitators choose a nearer way to applause, and copy the marvels of the hour. But the peculiarities, which are pleasing in original writers, will not bear imitation by the ablest hand, and such are not the hands which usually engage in this employment ; so that the imitation, like Gothic architecture in our country, is more desperately Gothic than its original, and at last model and imitation are brought alike into contempt ; a fate, of which we have abundant illustration. We must not judge of excellence in this way. No man chooses the noblest sciences, the sublimest scenes, nor the greatest men, for the companions of leisure hours ; and it is but a mistaken gratitude to pronounce those who have best entertained us the greatest masters of the lyre.

A great proportion of the poetry in our country is of this imitative kind. There is evidence enough, that it is not owing to want of genius, and we are inclined to ascribe it to a want of correct and strong ambition. No man here makes poetry a serious and engrossing pursuit ; and those who treat it merely as a graceful accomplishment, naturally imitate the manner of the writers they are most familiar with ; and as, for the reason just given, the writers most admired are not always most read, it has come to pass, as once in Israel, that they ' go in by-paths,' and the highways are deserted. Still we are confident, that the way of Milton and Pope, by which we mean the way of thoughtfulness, care, and labor, will triumph at last ; for we are convinced that there is a large body of cultivated men in our country, who, though no lovers of what bears the name of poetry at present, do yet take pleasure in reading our older writers and the truly excellent of the day ; who know that genius is as much a matter of cultivation as of nature ; who know that a taste for the beauty and grandeur of the visible world is formed by meditation, that acquaintance with the heart is not intuitive, and that power over hearts and souls is not to be acquired in an hour ; who therefore have no patience with those, who rest their claims upon immediate inspiration, and will neither read



nor hear without first having some assurance, that the writer, who invites their attention, instead of relying on charms and spells, has deliberately prepared himself for one of the highest and most difficult, and, when successful, most glorious enterprises of the mind.

Mr Sprague has secured the verdict of such men in his favor, and this is no light testimony to his merit. The occasion for which his longest poem was written, is one that assembles many persons who have no particular taste for poetry, but are disposed to listen and criticize it like any other intellectual exertion. Doubtless they are disposed to be pleased with what they hear, for want of candor is not the fault of our audiences ; but we think that the poet would hazard much, who should attempt to interest them by the prevailing prettiness of the day. He is obliged to address himself to a manly good sense, and to that degree of cultivation in his own department, which men of education are apt to reach in every fine and graceful art. It was evidently with such impressions of his audience, that Mr Sprague prepared the poem before us ; and, as might be expected from his ability, he ensured perfect success. Many of those, who looked for no pleasure from verse, except its lulling sounds, were amazed to hear from a poet so manly and business-like a production.

We cannot help thinking, that it would be well for our poets to have some such tribunal, from whose decisions they might learn the public taste, which is generally merciful in its judgments, and almost always just. If the poet writes for himself, it is hardly worth while to publish his works, and he may choose what style he will ; but if he intends to amuse or instruct the public, he must conform to their taste, unless he can prove it widely distant from truth and nature. This, we apprehend, no one could do. Our audiences are at least as enlightened as those of ancient Greece ; and there can be no doubt, that such works as Campbell's '*Gertrude*,' Moore's '*Melodies*,' Southey's '*Roderick*,' Byron's '*Corsair*,' and Mrs Hemans's '*England's Dead*,' would be listened to with enthusiastic delight. We have often thought, that, in all the fine arts, as well as fine writing, the object should be to gain the favor of refined minds, which have no intimate acquaintance with the particular art ; in other words, to aim at that simplicity which is universally and always pleasing. We do not believe that one of Allston's pictures could pass unnoticed



by any educated man, who had the least attachment for the art, however unversed in the mysteries of light, shade, and proportions. And when we have seen the exquisite weariness of audiences, listening to music which was understood by none but the performers, not to speak of the contortions of such as were lashing themselves up to rapture, common humanity has tempted us to wish, that some means could be devised to check this wanton expenditure of skill. Whoever has listened to the wailing of neglected poets, more in anger than in sorrow, over the perversion of public taste, would rejoice if a way was discovered to spare them that torture. We take the liberty to recommend to them to consult the public taste in one or two efforts; and if they deserve success, we believe they will have no reason to regret the trial. Nothing can exceed the favor shown to poets in this country. Bryant, Halleck, and others have been read and praised with enthusiasm; and if Percival had but followed their judicious example, his fine imagination and remarkable power of language would have given him a place second to no other in the public regard.

Mr Sprague has shown great good sense in this respect, and has accordingly met with uncommon favor. Though he has succeeded so well in theatrical addresses,—and where Byron failed, it is no small praise to have succeeded,—we cannot wish to see any more of them. Such a stiff and ungainly service is not worthy of his powers. Nor are we disposed to be so partial to his ‘Shakspeare Ode,’ brilliant although it is, as to some other pieces of less pretension. We prefer the following lines on ‘Art,’ which, we believe, were written for some public occasion. The circumstances are well selected and happily combined, and would give any reader the impression of true poetical power.

‘When, from the sacred garden driven,  
Man fled before his Maker’s wrath,  
An angel left her place in heaven,  
And cross’d the wanderer’s sunless path.  
’T was Art! sweet Art! new radiance broke,  
Where her light foot flew o’er the ground;  
And thus with seraph voice she spoke,  
“The curse a blessing shall be found.”

‘She led him through the trackless wild,  
Where noontide sunbeam never blazed;—



The thistle shrunk,—the harvest smiled,  
And nature gladden'd as she gazed.  
Earth's thousand tribes of living things,  
At Art's command to him are given ;  
The village grows, the city springs,  
And point their spires of faith to heaven.

' He rends the oak,—and bids it ride,  
To guard the shores its beauty graced ;  
He smites the rock,—upheaved in pride,  
See towers of strength, and domes of taste.  
Earth's teeming caves their wealth reveal,  
Fire bears his banner on the wave,  
He bids the mortal poison heal,  
And leaps triumphant o'er the grave.

' He plucks the pearls that stud the deep,  
Admiring Beauty's lap to fill ;  
He breaks the stubborn marble's sleep,  
And mocks his own Creator's skill.  
With thoughts that swell his glowing soul,  
He bids the ore illumine the page,  
And proudly scorning time's control,  
Commerces with an unborn age.

' In fields of air he writes his name,  
And treads the chambers of the sky ;  
He reads the stars, and grasps the flame  
That quivers round the Throne on high.  
In war renown'd, in peace sublime,  
He moves in greatness and in grace ;  
His power subduing space and time,  
Links realm to realm, and race to race.'

The next quotation is part of an address to two swallows, which flew into a church window during divine service. It reminds us of the mild and thoughtful beauty of Bryant's 'Lines to a Waterfowl,' perhaps the finest of that popular poet's writings. No subjects better display the talent of a man of genius ; to give such interest to a trifle, and use it to suggest high and important instruction, though often attempted, is seldom so successfully done.

' Gay, guiltless pair,  
What seek ye from the fields of heaven ?  
Ye have no need of prayer,  
Ye have no sins to be forgiven.



‘ Why perch ye here,  
Where mortals to their Maker bend ?  
Can your pure spirits fear  
The God ye never could offend ?

‘ Ye never knew  
The crimes for which we come to weep ;  
Penance is not for you,  
Bless'd wanderers of the *upper deep*.’

Mr Sprague is best known by his Poem delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Cambridge, in August, 1829. The poet, on this occasion, labors under some disadvantages. He succeeds an orator, who has already engaged the attention of the audience with some high intellectual subject, for a time limited only by his own discretion ; and who, whether dull or able, may be supposed to leave his hearers little disposed to listen to any other. Beside, by an absurd and unexplained arrangement, those, who would secure places for these performances, are compelled to endure an hour or two of previous declamation, of the unmeaning kind in vogue in our public institutions. All these things are certainly against him ; and it is not easy to select a subject which will afford sufficient interest for the variety of hearers. Mr Sprague, however, not only added to the high reputation which he put at stake, but made himself known as the author of a poem, the high classical merit of which has established his poetical character.

His subject is Curiosity, and we think it happily chosen ; if the subject is a matter of importance to one, who can give interest to any by rich and various illustration. The beginning of the poem is well imagined to awaken curiosity ; but it was a bold experiment to hold the minds of his hearers so long in suspense, and but for the excellence of what succeeds, would hardly have been forgiven.

The effect of this principle, in childhood, is thus beautifully described.

‘ In the pleased infant see its power expand,  
When first the coral fills his little hand ;  
Throned in his mother's lap, it dries each tear,  
As her sweet legend falls upon his ear ;  
Next it assails him in his top's strange hum,  
Breathes in his whistle, echoes in his drum ;  
Each gilded toy, that doting love bestows,  
He longs to break and every spring expose.



Placed by your hearth, with what delight he pores  
 O'er the bright pages of his pictured stores ;  
 How oft he steals upon your graver task,  
 Of this to tell you and of that to ask ;  
 And, when the waning hour to-bedward bids,  
 Though gentle sleep sit waiting on his lids,  
 How winningly he pleads to gain you o'er,  
 That he may read one little story more.' p. 5.

Mr Sprague has taken advantage of this occasion, to lash many of the vices and follies of the times. His censure on the press is timely and powerful. We may endure to hear the prints of half the country praising 'The Course of Time,' but their eulogies of the licentious and disgusting 'Pelham,' deserve his severest sarcasm. The fierce and brutal violence of this mighty element, for a few years past, is enough to fill a thoughtful mind with dismay, when we reflect, that millions are daily drinking from these poisonous and polluted streams ; and we are glad that Mr Sprague has given us a bright side to this dark and hopeless picture, colored with his usual power.

' All are not such ? O no, there are, thank Heaven,  
 A nobler troop to whom this trust is given ;  
 Who, all unbribed, on freedom's ramparts stand,  
 Faithful and firm, bright warders of the land.  
 By them still lifts the Press its arm abroad,  
 To guide all-curious man along life's road ;  
 To cheer young genius, pity's tear to start,  
 In truth's bold cause to rouse each fearless heart ;  
 O'er male and female quacks to shake the rod,  
 And scourge the unsexed thing that scorns her God.'

p. 12.

We give next the character of the miser, which reminds us of the characters of Pope. It would be well if such portraits were oftener held up to detestation in this country, where the power of gain being universal as the passion, and balanced by no other restraints than conscience and religion, which have but little influence with the worshippers of Mammon, we are in some danger of mistaking avarice for a virtue, and the miser for a benefactor of mankind.

' Go, seek him out on yon dear Gotham's walk,  
 Where traffic's venturers meet to trade and talk ;  
 Where Mammon's votaries bend, of each degree,  
 The hard-eyed lender, and the pale lendee ;



Where rogues insolvent strut in whitewashed pride,  
 And shove the dupes who trusted them aside.  
 How through the buzzing crowd he threads his way,  
 To catch the flying rumors of the day ;  
 To learn of changing stocks, of bargains crossed,  
 Of breaking merchants, and of cargoes lost ;  
 The thousand ills that traffic's walks invade,  
 And give the heart-ach to the sons of trade.  
 How cold he hearkens to some bankrupt's wo,  
 Nods his wise head, and cries,—“ I told you so ;  
 The thriftless fellow lived beyond his means,  
 He must buy brants,—I make my folks eat beans ; ”  
 What cares he for the knave, the knave's sad wife,  
 The blighted prospects of an anxious life ?  
 The kindly throbs that other men control,  
 Ne'er melt the iron of the miser's soul ;  
 Through life's dark road his sordid way he wends,  
 An incarnation of fat dividends ;  
 But when to death he sinks, ungrieved, unsung,  
 Buoyed by the blessing of no mortal tongue ;  
 No worth rewarded and no want redressed,  
 To scatter fragrance round his place of rest,  
 What shall that hallowed epitaph supply—  
 The universal wo when good men die ?  
 Cold Curiosity shall linger there,  
 To guess the wealth he leaves his tearless heir ;  
 Perchance to wonder what must be his doom,  
 In the far land that lies beyond the tomb ; —  
 Alas ! for him, if, in its awful plan,  
 Heaven deal with him as he hath dealt with man.'

pp. 17, 18.

There is one of the finest pictures we remember ever to have seen, of a family, the father of which is led by ‘curiosity’ to visit foreign lands. The gloom of his mansion, the regrets of his wife and children, and the thoughtfulness with which he leans over the cradle, with his purpose almost shaken, are described with truth and feeling ; and powerfully wound up with a view of him, lying in the cabin of the homeward vessel, with the seal of death on his brow, till the short preparation is made for that most forlorn of all services, the funeral at sea. We have only room for the close.

‘ Cold in his cabin now,  
 Death's finger-mark is on his pallid brow ;  
 No wife stood by, her patient watch to keep,  
 To smile on him, then turn away to weep ;



Kind woman's place rough mariners supplied,  
And shared the wanderer's blessing when he died.  
Wrapped in the raiment that it long must wear,  
His body to the deck they slowly bear ;  
Even there the spirit that I sing is true,  
The crew look on with sad, but curious view ;  
The setting sun flings round his farewell rays,  
O'er the broad ocean not a ripple plays ;  
How eloquent, how awful in its power,  
The silent lecture of death's sabbath hour ;  
One voice that silence breaks,—the prayer is said,  
And the last rite man pays to man is paid ;  
The plashing waters mark his resting-place,  
And fold him round in one long, cold embrace ;  
Bright bubbles for a moment sparkle o'er,  
Then break, to be, like him, beheld no more ;  
Down, countless fathoms down, he sinks to sleep,  
With all the nameless shapes that haunt the deep.'

pp. 24, 25.

Mr Sprague's language is simple and nervous, and his imagery brilliant and striking. There is a spirit of pervading good sense in this poem, which shows that he gives poetry its right place in his mind. Above all there is a lofty tone of thought, which indicates superiority to the affectations of the day. Notwithstanding the intimations conveyed in the close of this work, that the duties of his life are of no poetical character, we venture to hope, that some moral subject will again inspire him, and hazard nothing in predicting, that, in such an event, he will do honor to himself and the country.

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ART. III.—*Suggestions respecting Improvements in Education, presented to the Trustees of the Hartford Female Seminary, and published at their Request.* By CATHARINE E. BEECHER. Hartford. Packard & Butler. 8vo. pp. 84.

MUCH of the existing evil in the world may be removed or lessened by human agency. What now is, and always has been, regarded as the most powerful means for improving the condition of our race, is education. This being so well understood, it is sometimes asked, Why, then, are the hopes of